

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS,
HELD IN WASHINGTON, D. C., THURSDAY, APRIL 27, 1922.

A special meeting of the Commission of Fine Arts was held in its office at 1729 New York Avenue, northwest, Washington, D. C., on Thursday, April 27, 1922, for the consideration and location of the First Division Memorial.

The following members were present:

Mr. Moore, Chairman;
Mr. Greenleaf;
Mr. Fraser;
Mr. Bacon;
Mr. Ayres;
Mr. Mowbray;

and Mr. H. P. Caemmerer, Assistant to the Secretary. Mr. Gilbert, and Mr. John R. Rockart, of the architectural firm of Cass Gilbert, and the following representatives of the First Division Memorial Association:

Colonel Huguet, President of the First Division Memorial Association;
Major Allen, Secretary-Treasurer, of the First Division Memorial Association;
Colonel F. C. Marshall;
Colonel Campbell King;
Lieut. Colonel Shepherd, and
Mr. Clark Williams, of New York, appeared before the Commission.

Mr. Gilbert said that the First Division War Memorial Committee desire a monument so located and so designed that it shall be an embellishment of the National Capital. They also want a monument that will be permanent. The permanency of the monument is one of the difficult things to achieve. Stone is subject to conditions of the weather, to expansion and contraction. The form in which that stone is placed and the climatic conditions under which that exists are preeminent factors in the way of permanency. Ten years ago Mr. Gilbert said he visited the Saint-Gaudens

Lincoln in Chicago, and was amazed to find that a crack in the circular exedra had opened so that he could lay his folded umbrella down into it, and quite recently he heard that some one has put his foot down into the crack. This was through no fault of the designer but through the natural expansion and contraction of the stone. It is observed in the Washington Monument, on the steps of the Treasury Building where the steps on the south side have recently been repaired. Weather effects are one of the factors in the design of the First Division Monument. A fountain which has been suggested for this site, fine as it might be, would not be permanent. It is necessarily composed of too many pieces to be permanent, for not merely a hundred years but for centuries. Anything composed of a large number of ornamental pieces and figures will in time be broken off, and they cannot do that with a column. The Column of Vendome was pulled down by a mob during the Commune in Paris, in order to destroy this record of the Government. It would not have been done probably if it had not been possible to go up the inside of the column. In this case such a thing could not be done because the column is of course to be solid. (They might blow it up but to pull it down would require scaffolding and machinery not readily available to a mob). There are ruins of many columns in Rome which have outlasted the centuries.

As to the design for the First Division Memorial the Commission of Fine Arts at their meeting on March 31, 1922, did not approve the design of the monument for the proposed location south of the State, War and Navy Building, as it was said it would come into competition with the Washington Monument. Mr. Gilbert said he had made a very careful inspection of the site considered in its relation to the neighboring buildings - the State, War and Navy Building, the Corcoran Gallery of Art, the Red Cross, and the Daughters of the American Revolution building, and that there is no reason

for fear lest it would compete with the Washington Monument. One may take a pencil and place it in front of his eye and shut out the Washington Monument, which is 555-1/2 feet high. The First Division Memorial will be a column with a shaft about 35 to 40 feet in length, on the top of which will be a figure of Victory, to be designed by Daniel Chester French, the sculptor, and a base which is to have the names of the First Division dead, about 5,500, on bronze plates. The whole monument will not be more than 79 or 80 feet high, no higher than the Corcoran Gallery of Art (or proportionately higher if the 40' shaft is used). If you consider the "allee", which has been suggested to extend south of the State, War and Navy Building to the gardens near the Washington Monument, this monument can be properly related to it. A smaller shaft in this location would count for nothing at all. It must be in scale with the things around it. The monument at West Point, to which this First Division Memorial is said to compare, is 82 feet high, and has a shaft of 42 feet, and has a pedestal composed of several parts rising on a broad platform. This platform is now said to be in need of repairs due to expansion and contraction, and with such conditions in view the First Division is to have a shaft of one piece and there are as few joints exposed to the weather as possible.

A column as the terminal of the "allee" will have the optical effect of lengthening the "allee", as it will take up the lines of the "allee" in perspective as illustrated by various examples, whereas a broad low mass would appear to shorten the "allee" by intersecting and stopping the lines of the "allee". This should be an important consideration in the design. The Washington Monument does just this thing for the main axis to the mall.

It has been suggested that the First Division Memorial should be on ground more distinctive and higher than the site south of the State, War and Navy Building. With reference to this Mr. Gilbert said that such a location is not necessary, and that there are many columns in Europe similarly surrounded by buildings, - as the Column Vendome and the Column of the July in Paris, the Nelson Column, Trafalgar Square, and the Waterloo Column in London, the columns of the Piazzetta in Venice, the column of the Medici in Florence, the Column of Trojan in Rome, two columns in Haverhama and many others. The First Division would not approve of placing the monument on the site proposed south of the War College. The suggestion made that at the point south of the War College there is place for a series of monuments to other Divisions is fine provided Congress will authorize the erection of a monument to the Seventy-seventh, the Eightieth, Eighty-second, and other Divisions, but no one can say that Congress will do such a thing, and in the meantime the First Division Monument would be there by itself. Since the signing of the Armistice about 3-1/2 years ago there have been, Mr. Gilbert said, to his knowledge only three or four other Divisions that have interested themselves at all in a Division Memorial. Furthermore to let that be a place where Divisions might erect war memorials would give a series of monuments not at all related to each other and monuments as incongruous as those in Statuary Hall at the Capitol. Rather than to go south of the War College Mr. Gilbert said he felt certain the First Division would rather erect their monument in some other city. They have raised a sum of \$150,000, and have selected the site south of the State, War and Navy Building because they felt that it would be a site fitting for their war memorial. Mr. Gilbert said he examined the site with General Summerall, who commanded the First Division, and Mr. Moore, who thought the site suitable. The Commission of Fine Arts

approved this site for a memorial to the First Division subject to the approval of Congress. Mr. Gilbert said in conclusion that it is a misapprehension to think that the column would not be suitable in the proposed location, and that if there is something wrong with the design he would be glad to know about it.

Mr. Moore said the question with which the Commission of Fine Arts is concerned is purely a question involving matters of art, and that the Commission would consider the matter further with Mr. Gilbert and Mr. Rockart, after hearing from the representatives of the First Division.

Colonel Huguet, President of the First Division Memorial Association, spoke of the activities of the First Division in the World War. He said the First Division was made up of units of the regular Army, some of which had been serving in Vera Cruz, and some of them in Mexico. It is associated very intimately with the first American troops who went over to Europe and with General Pershing's name. The First Division sailed from New York June 12, 1917, and landed in France June 26, 1917. The first on the battlefield was a unit of the First Division. The three men seen on posters for Liberty Loan drives at that time were the first three casualties of the First Division who were wounded on the nights of November 1 and 2, 1917. The first real organizations of defensive that the American Army participated in in France was by a unit of the First Division May 28, 1918. The First Division, or a part of its units, took part in all of the battles and engagements, that were participated in by the American Army in France. The First Division was especially cited by General Pershing for bravery, the first to arrive in France, and the last to return from France, - August, 1919. On September 17, 1919, a part of the First Division marched in the parade here in Washington with full Army equipment. The total casualties of the First Division

amounted to 5,500, its replacements have not been determined exactly, they came from the National Army, and from other Divisions, and it is thought they amount to 60,000 or 80,000 men. The proposed War Memorial is therefore one in which each member of the First Division is especially interested in. There has been no thought on the part of anyone to exalt the First Division over other Divisions, the main desire is to have a memorial worthy of their Division and of their dead, a memorial suggesting victory, sacrifice, and patriotism. As to the details of the design they are leaving that to the architect. The Battle Monument at West Point is one which many of the First Division, especially officers, have seen, and which they think very beautiful. The First Division decided to have a monument similar to the West Point monument and they would like to have it located in Washington. The place they like best is the one which is being considered, south of the State, War and Navy Building. The First Division is not asking any aid from the Government for the erection of their memorial.

Mr. Clark Williams of New York, said it was his privilege to serve the First Division in a very intimate way, although not as a fighter, and said he hoped in the consideration of this matter the spirit behind the whole undertaking would be properly appreciated. The First Division he said was made up from the Regular Army, and then recruited from the States. The funds for the memorial have been paid in to the Treasury of the Memorial Committee of the First Division by thousands of mothers and fathers, and the men themselves, and they mutually feel that Washington is the most appropriate place for the First Division Memorial. Their dead number 5,500 men who gave their lives that the blessings of free Government might endure and the enterprise to erect this memorial may therefore be well considered a National enterprise.

Lieut. Colonel Shepherd, architect, of New York City, said he had

nothing to add to what had been said about the history of the First Division or as to its right to have a monument in this location, but desired to say a few things with regard to the artistic side of this enterprise, principally as to a suggestion to have a fountain in the location. The other day, Lieut. Colonel Shepherd said, he passed by the plaza in New York City where he has been watching the gradual disintegration of the fountain in the plaza completed only recently. On the lee side of the fountain he said you can not only put your hands and feet into the cracks but some of the steps have been split and come apart and he believes it would take thousands of dollars to place it in proper repair. To the best of his knowledge no pains were spared in the execution of that fountain, and what has happened to the plaza fountain would happen to one down here. As for the shaft competing with the Washington Monument, Lieut. Colonel Shepherd thought this ridiculous. The other day he said he saw the Washington Column in Baltimore, which is set in with surrounding buildings and streets. Being interested in the First Division Memorial he took the trouble to get the dimensions of this monument and found that the base is 20 feet high, the column itself is 130 feet high, the statue including the pedestal, which surmounts it, is 16 feet high, making a total height of the column 166 feet. This First Division Memorial will be less than 100 feet high and will not interfere with the Washington obelisk. Lieut. Colonel Shepherd suggested placing the monument on the axis of the Corcoran Gallery of Art rather than at the intersection of E Street, as proposed.

The officers of the First Division having concluded their arguments the Commission discussed further with Mr. Gilbert artistic problems involved. Mr. Gilbert again asserted that this type of monument at the location proposed will not interfere with the Washington Monument. The Commission then con-

sidered the question of the names proposed for the monument. Mr. Gilbert stated that the First Division raised the fund from their members with the understanding that the names of their dead would appear on the monument and the Memorial Committee of the First Division is bound by it. Mr. Gilbert said he proposes placing the names on bronze tablets and he does not believe that will be objectionable. Mr. Moore then read a letter which he has received from Major General Summerall from Honolulu, written under date of April 8, 1922, as follows:

"I deeply regret to learn that the Commission of Fine Arts has voiced its opposition to the site selected for a monument south of the War Department to more than 5,000 dead of the First Division. I need not express to you the surprise and pain that this information has brought to me.

"In our conversations I have disclosed to you fully the sentiments which inspired the members of the Division to honor the memory of their dead. I had hoped that the Commission of Fine Arts, appreciating the significance of such a memorial in our National Capital, would not withhold the approval of the site. Its members cannot be unacquainted with the sacrifices, the sufferings, the wounds, and the death that characterized the career of this Division, which represented in the highest sense the Regular Army and the American people.

"In selecting Mr. Cass Gilbert, and Mr. Daniel Chester French as the sculptor and the architect, the Division availed itself of talent which not only insured a worthy memorial, but which must inspire confidence in the members of the Commission of Fine Arts. I am at a loss therefore to know the reasons which have impelled the Commission to withhold approval.

"I have been informed that an objection has been raised on the ground that other divisions might wish to erect similar monuments to their dead. As you may recall, I explained that my original hope was that all divisions would erect monuments to their dead that would harmonize with one another and that would symbolize the sacrifices of the nation. It was my vision that these monuments should be placed in our National Capital and that their location should receive some inspiring name such, for example, as "The Court of the Triumphant Dead" and that they would become a shrine for our people for all future generations. Unhappily, I have been unable to learn that any other division ever proposes to erect a monument of this nature to its dead in the National Capital. From my experience in raising the money for the First Division Memorial, I feel that there is no

probability that any such action will be taken by any other division, and that the First Division will indeed stand alone as commemorating the sacrifices of the Regular Army and of our American manhood. Whatever may be done in the construction of buildings, memorial halls, and utilitarian projects, a monument such as it is proposed to erect for the First Division dead will carry with it an inspiration that cannot pertain to buildings and tablets.

"America is sadly deficient, in my judgment, in memorials that are truly inspiring of patriotism. I have seen many shafts and structures, but the Battle Monument at West Point is the only one within my knowledge that carries a message and a conviction to uplift our people. The First Division Monument would have ever a greater influence upon the nation, if placed at the spot selected where it would be accessible and yet not exposed to the bustle and hurry of the working world.

"There could be no lack of harmony between this monument and the Washington Monument, and other structures in Potomac Park. It is screened by trees from the Washington Monument, and yet the passer-by will see it as he approaches from the various quiet avenues and paths in the park. The architect has provided against any disagreeable contrast between the monument and the buildings within view from it.

"From every point of view and for every reason, this site commends itself as the only one of which I have any knowledge that would be suitable. I have studied the city of Washington and I am familiar with Arlington Cemetery. Under no circumstances could I consider placing it at the War College. I feel therefore that some prejudice arising from motives inconceivable to me, must have influenced the members of the Commission in such an unfortunate manner. I appeal therefore to you and to the members of the Commission to view this subject with sympathy and with understanding of the sentiments that have actuated the living comrades of the First Division in their efforts to honor their dead.

"Should the National Commission of Fine Arts ultimately withhold its approval of the site, I feel that there is no alternative but for us to consider placing the monument in some other city. I need not point out that this monument will be a worthy asset of art to the National Capital, and I have no doubt that other cities would view its possession in accordance with its merits and its sentiments."

The Commission then inspected a tree planting plan south of the State, War and Navy Building, and considered the proposed memorial in relation to that. Mr. Greenleaf suggested a plaza treatment of the space immediately south of the

State, War and Navy Building and east of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, with the First Division Monument in the center, with a suitable planting of elms to the south, southeast and southwest of the plaza. The plaza would serve as a terminus of the "allee" leading to the Washington Monument grounds.

The Commission felt that the monument so placed would not interfere with the Washington Monument. The Commission approved tentatively the location of the First Division Memorial in this plaza and Mr. Gilbert was asked to make a sketch of the proposed plaza, which he agreed to do.

The Act of Congress pertaining to the First Division Memorial, approved December 16, 1921, provides that the location shall be approved by the Joint Committee on the Library and reads as follows:

"RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED, That the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, be, and he is hereby, authorized and directed to grant the Memorial Association of the First Division, United States Army, permission to erect on public grounds of the United States in the city of Washington, District of Columbia, a monument to the dead of the First Division, American Expeditionary Forces, in the World War: PROVIDED, That the site chosen and the design of the monument and pedestal shall be approved by the Joint Committee on the Library, with the advice and recommendations of the National Commission of Fine Arts, and the United States shall be put to no expense in or by the erection of this memorial."

Mr. Gilbert said he hoped the Joint Committee on the Library could have a meeting to decide on this matter about the middle of May.

The Commission agreed to recommend to the Joint Committee on the Library that the desires of the First Division for location south of the State, War and Navy Building, be approved. The recommendation of this location, however, depends upon certain conditions:

1. That the shaft of the monument shall be lowered substantially.

2. That the names shall be inscribed on slabs arranged about the base of the monument in such manner as not to present a vertical surface.

3. That the monument shall be located near the street and that a plaza shall be formed, of which the monument shall be the central feature.

